

FNCS

Leadership Institute

Program Overview

2000/2001

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Program Overview

Investing in our people is a primary goal of the Leadership 2000 and beyond process. The Leadership Institute is the first piece of a process to dedicate resources to preparing FNCS staff for future Agency challenges. The FNCS Leadership Institute is a developmental program for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services employees. The program exists on the premise that each staff member has a significant leadership responsibility for the Agency. The Leadership Institute mission is to:

Develop future FNCS leaders by providing high-quality leadership training to current FNCS employees who want to lead FNCS in meeting its future challenges.

The Leadership Institute will select up to 24 employees to participate in a series of learning activities over a 15-month period. Though these participants retain their regular duties, they will actively enhance their leadership competencies.

The Leadership Institute provides the structure, processes and opportunities for participants to:

- Assess individual strengths and needs as leaders;
- Plan specific learning activities that develop leadership capabilities;
- Practice leadership skills in real settings;
- Learn skills they can use to motivate employees, manage performance, and implement necessary change;
- Explore the various dimensions of leadership together with experts and colleagues;
- Generate networks, trust, and foster future collaboration; and
- Demonstrate growth in leadership skills necessary for successful service in agency leadership positions and roles in the future.

Participants in the program will achieve these objectives through a variety of learning strategies. They will begin by completing a comprehensive individual leadership needs assessment and establishing a Personal Learning Contract (PLC) that includes core learning experiences shared by all class members. In addition to the core training that all will receive, each participant will pursue other learning activities based on his or her own unique learning needs. Through the combination of these strategies, the Leadership Institute will provide the broad foundation of needed leadership skills and experience.

Timeline

The schedule of events for the delivery of the first class of the Leadership Institute is shown below:

◆ Leadership Institute announced	August 18, 2000
◆ Deadline for applications to participate	September 8, 2000
◆ Participants selected	October 1, 2000
◆ Individual needs assessment begins	October 3, 2000
◆ Mentors selected	October 31, 2000
◆ Leadership Assessment, Planning and Feedback Workshop	December 4-8, 2000
◆ Personal Learning Contracts approved	TBA
◆ Leadership Learning Lab I	TBA
◆ Leadership Learning Lab II	TBA
◆ Post Assessment, Recognition, and Graduation Workshop	December 2001
◆ Other learning activities*	November 1, 1999 through December 31, 2000
◆ Program evaluation	Continuous

*(Includes the 2 Action Learning Projects that participants must complete as well as other learning activities that participants may individually select to complete. These activities may include a temporary assignment to another office, executive shadow assignments, executive interviews, self study projects and formal courses).

Class Selection Process

For the Class of 2001 all current FNCS employees in grades GS/GM 11-14 are eligible to apply to the Institute.

Announcement:

The Leadership Institute is announced to all eligible employees through:

- A written invitation to apply from the Administrator and Associate Administrator;
- Senior Manager promotion of the Leadership Institute opportunity to all their eligible employees; and
- The Leadership 2000 and Beyond web page and bulletin board which will also announce the Institute's 2001 class and process for application.

Applications:

Eligible employees will self nominate by submitting a completed application to the Leadership Institute that includes:

- General applicant information;
- A current resume;
- Most recent performance application
- A narrative statement addressing their experience and accomplishments in the core competencies for leadership as specified in the Leadership Excellence Framework; (Attached)
- A narrative statement addressing their reason for wanting to be selected to participate in the Leadership Institute;
- A supervisory assessment of their experience and accomplishments in the core competencies of the Leadership Excellence Framework; and
- A statement certifying accuracy and authorship of application.

Review of Applications and Selection:

All complete applications will be reviewed and evaluated by the Executive Board. Approximately 24 FNCS employees will be chosen on the basis of their assessed leadership potential, Agency work force planning needs, organizational needs and employee diversity within legal requirements. Representation from various program and management areas, geographical areas, as well as headquarters, regional and field offices will be considered.

Individual Leadership Needs Assessment

The individual needs assessment is the foundation for participation in the Leadership Institute. Each participant will complete a 360-degree feedback process based on the qualities identified in the Office of Personnel Management's Leadership Effectiveness Framework.

This model of desired leadership attributes constitutes the basis of all supervisory, managerial, and executive selection, training and development in USDA. The model includes 27 core competencies in five major areas:

- Leading Change;
- Leading People;
- Results Driven;
- Business Acumen; and
- Building Coalitions/Communication.

The 360-feedback process enables participants to analyze their current skill levels in all 27 competencies. Participants distribute survey forms as desired among peers, supervisors, and employees they supervise. Subsequently, each participant will receive a confidential report of their results. The Leadership Institute Program Coordinator will receive a composite report for the class to use in developing the core seminar curriculum.

The Leadership Institute will also provide opportunities for each participant to assess his or her own behavioral tendencies in the areas of leadership style, personality, values, leadership interests and leadership skills.

The feedback information provided to each participant is the basis for development of the Personal Learning Contract (PLC) that focuses on competency areas needing improvement or enhancement.

Personal Learning Contracts

Participants in the Leadership Institute will play the key role in their own development by constructing a Personal Learning Contract (PLC) that provides a structure for development of their leadership skills. Participants will construct the PLC by using their individual needs assessment data and in consultation with their mentor, supervisor, and others. Through their PLC, participants will:

- Identify the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they will focus on while in the Leadership Institute;
- Develop a personalized plan for learning these skills;
- Establish a timeline for completing the training; and
- Define measures to demonstrate successful completion of the training.

The PLC must include all of the required activities as well as individually selected optional experiences. Typically the PLC will include:

Required Curriculum: (pages 8-1)

1 Team Project
1 Action Learning Projects
4 Core Seminars

Optional Activities: (pages 11-12)

Shadow assignments
Temporary assignment to another office
Executive interviews
Individual formal training (optional)
Self study books, tapes, videos, etc.

Each participant in the Leadership Institute will craft a PLC that balances the demands of their official position with their developmental efforts. Consequently, each participant is expected to consult closely with his or her supervisor to ensure that the development efforts are effectively blended with the demands of their position.

The development of the PLC will also require effective negotiation and planning with other agency officials who may be impacted by the selection of Action Learning Projects.

Participants are responsible for submitting their PLC through their supervisor, mentor, and the Leadership Institute Program Coordinator for concurrence. The Executive Board provides final approval. All activities must be completed by class graduation December 31, 2001.

Required Curriculum

Core seminars:

Leadership Assessment, Planning and Feedback Workshop: December 5-8, 2000:

The Leadership Assessment, Planning and Feedback Workshop is the first of four required core seminars attended by all Leadership Institute participants. This event focuses on the individual needs assessment process and the development of Personal Learning Contracts. At the seminar the participants receive:

- An introduction to the principles of effective leadership in the 21st century. Senior FNCS officials and outside experts will discuss how FNCS leaders will need to approach their role in the challenging years ahead. Key topics will include the distinction between managers and leaders and the elements of FNCS leadership culture including assumptions, beliefs, and behavioral norms;
- Individual results and interpretation from the 360-degree feedback process including an explanation of the Leadership Effectiveness Framework model;
- Further opportunities for individual self assessment such as personality type, learning styles, leadership styles, and values clarification;
- Instruction on how adults learn and how they can get the most from the program's learning experiences;
- An explanation of the requirements and options for their Personal Learning Contract, and resources and assistance in getting started on it; and
- Assistance in establishing an effective mentor-protégé relationship with their mentor. (Mentors will attend a mentor orientation and training session during the same week and at the same site as the Leadership Assessment, Planning and Feedback Workshop. Opportunities will be provided at this seminar for mentor - protégé interaction.)

Supervisors of participants will attend the Leadership Institute. Their understanding and support for the development process is a key to the success of the program.

Leadership Learning Labs I and II: TBA

These two core seminars will address the key leadership training needs of the group as a whole. The curriculum will focus on key topic areas within these five major areas of the Leadership Effectiveness Framework:

- Leading Change;
- Leading People;
- Results Driven;
- Business Acumen; and
- Building Coalitions/Communication.

The Office of Quality Management and the Employee Development Team will design each Learning Lab to feature formal seminars led by outstanding external experts. The specific modules will focus on priority group needs as determined from the composite results of Agency and individual needs assessments.

A major component of each Learning Lab will be participant cluster groups. Each of these groups is comprised of 6 to 7 Leadership Institute participants who serve as learning support groups throughout the program. The Leadership Institute Program Coordinator (LIPC) will determine cluster group assignments prior to the Learning Labs based on criteria that include managerial experience, occupational specialty, agency mix, work location, grade, and diversity considerations. The LIPC will also assign a Leadership Institute staff advisor to assist the group as needed.

Action Learning Projects:

Classroom training is one important development tool for developing leaders. However, research indicates that on-the-job development of new skills and knowledge is the ideal means to achieve long-term performance improvement. The Leadership Institute will provide this learning opportunity by the requirement that participants complete two Action Learning Projects (ALP) during the 15-month period of the program.

The Action Learning Projects will include two of the following three options:

- An individual project focusing on a specific competency enhancement needs;
- A License to Improve project; or
- A Team Leader assignment on a High Impact Project Team.

When completing their ALP, participants will work with others to identify and analyze a real-life challenge in the Agency. Participants must also develop a solution for the challenge and an implementation plan for the proposed solution. The problem must be a real issue faced by one or more functional activities in the Agency and of an organizational rather than technical nature. It must provide a suitable opportunity to address the developmental needs of the participant and have clear significance to the Agency.

As the Institute is intended to be a broadening career experience, the ALP problem must fall outside of the normal boundaries of the participant's regular job. The assignment may require temporary relocation. In some cases, the ALP may require a temporary duty assignment to another office.

The participant is responsible for identifying, describing, and obtaining prior approval for each ALP as part of their Personal Learning Contract. This process has the following steps:

- Identifying and evaluating possible projects: Using individual assessment results, participants will contact various officials and offices in areas where developmental needs might be addressed. The participant may involve his or her mentor in seeking suggestions, identifying pertinent contacts, or in helping to obtain support. Further, supervisors and the Leadership Institute Program Coordinator may have helpful suggestions;
- Gaining concurrence of impacted officials: Participants are responsible for obtaining support from Agency officials who have jurisdiction or who might be directly affected by the project.
- Documenting the proposed project: Participants must submit a description of the project in a proposal format as part of their Personal Learning Contract. Proposals will be approved on the basis of their applicability to the participant's learning needs and their potential value to the Agency.
- Completing the project: Participants will complete approved projects with minimal oversight and in consultation with directly affected offices and Agency officials. Problems that occur which could delay or alter the assignment need to be brought to the attention of the Leadership Institute Program Coordinator.
- Reporting on the project: At project conclusion, participants will prepare and deliver oral and written summaries of project activity and results to the impacted offices. A copy of the written report will be provided to the participant's supervisor, mentor and Leadership Institute Program Coordinator.
- Project evaluation: Information will be collected during and subsequent to the project's activities in order to determine its overall usefulness to the participant's

growth and to the Agency generally. The participant and affected officials will contribute to this assessment.

Post Assessment, Recognition and Graduation Workshop - December 2001:

This final seminar provides a forum for participants to complete their learning program through final reports, feedback, and recognition.

All participants will present an oral report to their cluster groups summarizing their individual learning experiences, including their High Impact Project and/or License to Improve Project. This report will include their activities, learning, and recommendations for future Leadership Institute participants and staff.

This final formal event also will include aspects of a post program assessment. This assessment will identify, measure and document what (if any) enhancement in leadership skills has occurred as perceived through the eyes of Leadership Institute participants, mentors, supervisors, coworkers and other associates. During this meeting participants will exchange feedback with their cluster group peers and with the Leadership Institute staff. Participants will identify post program improvement goals for themselves based on this assessment.

A graduation/social event will be held with participation by the FNCS senior managers.

Optional Activities

Leadership Institute participants may pursue individual learning activities that are unique to their own specific learning needs. Options include:

Temporary Assignment:

The developmental needs of participants in the Leadership Institute will frequently involve the need for experience that is outside of his or her assigned program area or occupational specialty. The use of a short term detail of 30 days or less can be an excellent means of acquiring this experience.

Executive Shadowing:

Leadership development efforts often include the use of executive shadowing assignments as a means of providing exposure to leadership in a higher level arena. Such assignments typically involve 2-days of continuous exposure to a higher-level manager's work arena. These shadow assignments provide an opportunity to view the strategic approach, decision making styles, problem solving techniques, and relationship building methods of other leaders.

Executive Interviews:

Planning and conducting an executive interview can be an effective leadership development method. Through a well planned interview, a participant can gain key insights into the dynamics of successful leadership. Participants will first select the objectives of the interview, i.e., what aspect of leadership do they wish to explore, then identify the persons to be interviewed, and finally plan the interviews to get at the relevant issues.

Self Study:

Pursuit of learning is often accomplished very effectively on one's own through the volume of material available in books, tapes, videos, the Internet, etc. Participants are encouraged to select areas of independent self study for their Personal Learning Contract and to explore these many low-cost but highly effective means of acquiring knowledge.

Formal Courses:

Limited funding has been set aside to support attendance by Leadership Institute participants in additional formal courses. These formal courses should be selected on the basis of a unique individual leadership development need that is not being met through other Leadership Institute activities.

Roles and Responsibilities:**Participants:**

In the final analysis the individual participant has the responsibility for making his or her Leadership Institute experience rewarding and satisfying. The Leadership Institute provides a context and support for development. Participants are expected to seize the opportunity by seeking to understand their learning needs, identify appropriate ways to address their needs, and to overcome obstacles to reap the benefits.

Participation in the Leadership Institute is a special privilege. Resource limitations allow only a few employees to attend in a given period. Therefore, selected employees must adhere faithfully to the program requirements. Failure to meet these requirements could jeopardize successful completion. At the same time, participants must be mindful of their obligation to their regular duties and to the needs of their supervisor and other colleagues.

By making the most of this opportunity for individual development, and by making it a success for the Agency as a whole, participants can help to pave the way for other employees to gain from the Leadership Institute experience in the future.

Mentor - Protégé Relationship:

A Mentor - Protégé relationship will be established for all participants. The mentor will assist the participant in developing a Personal Learning Contract (PLC) and play an ongoing and active support role throughout the program. Specifically, the mentor's responsibilities include:

- Attending mentoring training during the participant's Leadership Assessment, Feedback and Planning Workshop (December 2000);
- Serving as a role model and resource for participant;
- Working with the participant and participant's supervisor to develop their PLC;
- Meeting with the participant on at least four occasions to discuss accomplishments;
- Providing support and feedback to the participant as needed;
- Serving as a mentor throughout the duration of the Leadership Institute; and
- Participating in the post-program assessment process.
- Mentors will be selected carefully. The mentor must be a leader who can foster the leadership development efforts of the participant. A leader must be willing to take time to share their own successes and failures and explain the responsibilities and recognize important characteristics of a leader. For example, in Warren Bennis' book, *On becoming a Leader*, he describes a successful leader as one who is:

“innovative, original, developing, people-oriented, inspires trust, provides long-range perspective, originates, challenges status quo. He predicts that the next generation of leaders will have certain things in common. They are:

- broad education;
- boundless curiosity;
- boundless enthusiasm;
- belief in people and teamwork;
- willingness to take risks;
- commitment to excellence;
- readiness; and
- virtue and vision.”

In the Mentor - Protégé relationship, the mentor:

- is willing to serve as a mentor and fulfill the indicated responsibilities above;
- is not in the participant's immediate chain of command;
- exhibits "ideal" mentor characteristics: supportive, patient, respected, respectful people-oriented, an effective teacher, self confident and an achiever;
- has led change efforts in their own areas and taken risks;
- is known to be flexible, innovative, participatory and results-oriented; and

The process of selecting mentors will begin following the participants selection to the Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute Program Coordinator will supply a list of names of agency managers who have indicated a desire to serve in this role.

The Leadership Institute Program Coordinator will assess the effectiveness of the mentor - participant relationships throughout the program. This assessment may include questionnaires to mentors and participants regarding the nature, frequency of contact, and value of the relationship to the participant's overall developmental experience.

Supervisors:

Participant supervisors play a key role throughout the Leadership Institute. Specifically:

- *Selection Process:* Supervisors rate applicant experience and accomplishments on each of the five major areas of the Leadership Effectiveness Framework in order to assess their current readiness for leadership. The employee's most recent performance appraisal is also considered in the selection process.
- *Needs Assessment:* Supervisors will participate in the 360 feedback process for their employees who are participating in the Leadership Institute.
- *Leadership Assessment, Planning and Feedback Workshop:* Supervisors are invited to attend this program which will include a workshop on supporting and benefiting from leadership development.
- *Personal Learning Contract:* Supervisors will assist participants during the construction of their PLC and must concur with the final version prior to submission to the Executive Board.

- *Post Assessment:* Supervisors will participate in an ongoing program assessment process. Through their response to anonymous questionnaires and other feedback, supervisors will help the agency assess individual participant leadership development during the program and the overall impact of the Institute on the agency.

Employee Development Team:

On a day-to-day basis, the Institute's activities will be directed by the Employee Development Team. The team is responsible for the following duties:

- Liaison and staff support for the Executive Board;
- Design, development, and delivery of learning activities and events;
- Supervision of contractors;
- Oversight of delivery of program components;
- Advice and consultations to participants and mentors; and
- Administrative support services, e.g., off-site meeting logistics.

Leadership Institute Executive Board:

Overall direction and supervision of the Leadership Institute is provided by the Executive Board appointed by the Administrator. This group has final approval authority for all Leadership Institute plans, selection process, and policies.

Program Evaluation

The Leadership Institute will be evaluated continuously in order to determine the effectiveness of the overall program and its various components. The results of the evaluation will help guide the development and delivery of the future Leadership Institute classes.

Specific evaluation steps will include:

- *Core seminar reaction surveys:* Participants will evaluate each session;
- *Action Learning Project feedback:* The Leadership Institute Program Coordinator (LIPC) will collect information during and after the completion of Action Learning Projects to determine their worth in the development of the participant and their value to the agency;
- *Participant reports:* Participants present an oral report of their learning activities during the final core seminar to their cluster groups. In addition, the LIPC will develop and collect a written post program evaluation form completed by participants;

- *Mentor-Protege feedback:* The LIPC will also collect periodic feedback from mentors and participants regarding the nature and value of this relationship to each participant's development;
- *Supervisor feedback:* Realizing the need to balance effective development with the day-to-day needs of the Agency, the LIPC will provide a process for supervisors to submit periodic feedback concerning their perceptions of their participating employee's development and the impact on his or her regular duties; and
- *360 feedback on participant development:* Participant development as leaders will be measurable on the basis of the pre and post program 360 feedback assessment process. A composite profile of these results will be useful in assessing the program's effectiveness.